

15

the establishment of said calling connection to said facility, and

means concurrently enabled with said inhibiting means for examining the stored busy-idle status of said called facility and for enabling said visual indicating device of said specific one of said buttons at said calling station when said stored status of said called facility is determined busy.

16. The invention set forth in claim 15 wherein said specific one of said buttons is a tracking button having first and second visual indicating devices uniquely associated therewith, and wherein said enabled visual indicating device is said first indicating device, further comprising

means controlled by a busy to idle transition of said called facility for turning off said first visual indicating device of said tracking button.

17. The invention set forth in claim 16 further comprising means for providing a common audible signal at said calling station,

means enabled by the operation of said tracking button while said calling station is on hook for turning on said second visual indicating device associated with said tracking button, and

means controlled by each busy to idle transition of said called facility for enabling said common audible signal at said calling station when said second visual indicating device of said tracking button is turned on.

18. The invention set forth in claim 16 further comprising

means concurrently enabled with said inhibiting means for storing paired identities of said calling station and said called facility, and

means controlled jointly by the off hook condition of said calling station and the operation of said tracking button at said calling station while said identities are stored for establishing a calling connection to said called facility.

19. A method of tracking a called station in a communication system having a plurality of such stations each having communication paths therebetween, said method comprising the steps of

determining the busy-idle status of each said station, temporarily establishing, under control from a first station, an association between said first station and a selected other station as a target station,

providing, separate from said communication paths, a first indication at said first station when said target station is busy, and

providing, separate from said communication paths, a second indication at said first station when said target station is idle.

20. In a communication system where any one of a number of telephone stations may selectively communicate with any other one of said telephone stations or with system facilities over communication paths established between a calling and called one of said stations

16

or system facilities, the improved method comprising the steps of

selecting at a calling one of said stations a called station or facility to which a call is to be directed, establishing in response to a selection at said calling station a communication connection to said selected called station or facility,

storing the busy-idle status of said called station or called facility,

providing special signals to said calling station, receiving special signals from said calling station, inhibiting in response to receipt of one of said special signals from said calling station followed by selection at said calling station of a called one of said stations or facilities, the establishment of said communication connection to said called station or facility,

examining, concurrently with the enabling of said last step, the stored busy-idle status of said called station or facility, and

enabling said special signals at said calling station when said stored status of said called station or facility is determined busy.

21. The invention set forth in claim 20 further comprising the step of

changing said special signals at said calling station under control of each busy to idle transition of said called station or facility.

22. In a communication system having a plurality of stations and system facilities, each station having a plurality of buttons and where each station may establish a calling connection to any other station or system facility by operation of one of said buttons and by selectively providing the called number identification of a said called facility, the improved method comprising the steps of

storing the busy-idle statuses of said stations and system facilities in a memory, recognizing special dialing signals from said calling station,

inhibiting the establishment of said calling connection to a called station or facility in response to recognition of a particular one of said special dialing signals from said calling station followed by receipt of a called station or facility identification number from said calling station,

examining, concurrently with the enabling of said inhibiting step, the stored busy-idle status of said called station or facility, and

enabling a visual indication at said calling station when said stored status of said called station or facility is determined busy.

23. The invention set forth in claim 22 further comprising the step of

turning off under control of a busy to idle transition of said called station or facility, said calling station indication.

* * * * *